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12 Mar '68The Effect of Mining the Dinh Vu Maritime Canal on Shipping to Haiphong

Aerial mining of the Dinh Vu Maritime Canal, a vital link in the main sea approach to Haiphong's dry cargo wharves, would trap at least eight ships, a majority of them Communist, in the wharf area and, if denial of the Canal were sustained, would for two months, at least, reduce the ability of the port to discharge imports of dry cargo by from 50 to 65 percent. North Vietnam's ability to adjust to interdiction of the Maritime Canal over a period longer than two months would ~~depend~~ depend on its ability to make greater numbers of lighters and stevedores available. Congestion that resulted from the arrival of a record volume of dry cargo imports during January 1968 indicates that the supply of both lighters and stevedores in Haiphong is already limited.

Trapped Ships

If the use of the Dinh Vu Maritime Canal were denied to North Vietnam as the result of aerial mining, it is almost certain that a minimum of ~~20~~ eight ships would be trapped in the main wharf area of Haiphong. If patterns established in 1967 continue, four would be Soviet, two Chinese Communist or Eastern European, and two Free World.

Impact on the Discharge of Import Dry Cargoes

In 1967, over 99 percent of North Vietnam's imports by sea came through Haiphong. More than one million tons of these imports consisted of dry cargo. It is estimated that 50 percent of these dry cargo imports were discharged from ships at berth onto the wharves, 30 percent were discharged into lighters

either from ships at berth or from ships anchored off the wharf area, and that

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20 percent were discharged into lighters from ships anchored in the Quarantine Anchorage at the seaward end of the Maritime Canal or further out to sea in the direction of the Zero Buoy. In the event of closure of the Maritime Canal ~~by mining, the result of mining, the result of mining, the result of mining~~ ^{in the} ~~the result of mining, the result of mining, the result of mining~~ all dry cargoes will have to be discharged on the seaward side of the Maritime Canal. Thus, the lighterage and stevedoring personnel formerly used there would be supplemented by that no longer ~~usable~~ ^{they} usable in the main port area. Because ~~it~~ ^{they} would be travelling longer distances between the ships transloading and ~~transloading~~ ^{transloading} points west and northwest of Haiphong, the lighters transferred from the main port area would not be able to discharge as much cargo in a given period as before, even with an increased supply of stevedores. Thus, the total discharge capacity of the port would be diminished not only by the 50 percent that formerly moved over the sides of the ships onto the wharves, but by a fraction of the 30 percent that was formerly discharged into lighters in the main port area. With discharge capacity reduced by more than 50 percent, North Vietnam would be under immediate pressure to expand its lighter fleet. Once this fleet was expanded sufficiently to provide work for the stevedores rendered surplus by the closure of the wharves, the supply of stevedores might also become a problem. It would probably take a minimum of two months to achieve a meaningful expansion of the lighter fleet.